

LOBBY CALL

August 25, 2026

136th General Assembly
119th US Congress

No party shall record, tape, otherwise capture, reproduce or broadcast any audio, video, or digital content from this session without specific consent of the League of Women Voters of Ohio.

Housekeeping

Be Present

Be Respectful

Assume good intent

Recognize that the materials, statements, and opinions are private to the organization and should not be shared without specific consent from the League or the speaker.

No party shall record, tape, or otherwise capture reproduce or broadcast any audio, video or digital content from this session without specific consent from the League of Women Voters of Ohio.



Around the Statehouse

Budget Surplus: What Is It

Ohio's legislature has underfunded public school students for decades, including most recently in the state budget for 2026 and 2027:

THE MISSING MONEY
\$2.75 BILLION

SHORTCHANGED FROM OHIO KIDS IN 2026-27

That's what Ohio schools are owed under the
Fair School Funding Plan — but the legislature refused to pay.

At the same time, the state has decreased its share of school funding, causing districts to go back to voters for more frequent levies:

OHIO'S SHARE OF SCHOOL FUNDING

The state has walked away from its promise

46.3%

FY 2019

State paid nearly
half the bill

-14.1 POINTS

32%

FY 2027

Local taxpayers pick
up what the state drops

Budget Surplus: Heights Coalition Statement

The Opportunity

“Ohio ended its fiscal year in June with more than \$2.427 billion in unencumbered funds. (2) Ohio raised more from taxes than predicted (estimated \$1.237 million) while expenses were about \$778 million less than planned. (3)

“Instead of making public education the priority and directing this substantial surplus to fill the funding gap, lawmakers passed HB 479 and committed more than \$1.2 billion to pet projects and one-time rebates. None of the money benefited public education. This is the second time that members of the 136th General Assembly failed to use their power to adequately fund public education, their Constitutional responsibility.”

2. Murnieks, Kimberly, Director Office of Budget and Management. State of Ohio Monthly Financial Report, July 10, 2026, p. 37 and 38.
3. Fleeter, Howard. On the Money, "FISCAL YEAR 2026: End-of-year June 2026 Bottom Line: Plus \$2.105 billion," July 13, 2026.

But ...Not one \$ went to public schools

End of fiscal year 2026 report indicates the state had **\$2.428 billion in unencumbered funds** in June.

Legislators appropriated \$1.2 billion in HB 479.

None of it went to public education. They turned their back again on their constitutional obligation to Ohio's public school students.

About **\$536 million was carried forward - unspent.**

So...

Commit Remaining Funds to Public Education for FY27 - NOW

Target Ohio's most vulnerable and costly to educate students: children living in poverty and children with disabilities. The number of students in both categories has increase over the last four years¹, but state funding has failed to keep up with the cost of educating these students.

Voters should evaluate all candidates for their commitment to fully implementing and funding the Fair School Funding Plan in the 2027 budget cycle.

Budget Surplus: Heights Coalition Statement

“What We Can Do

“As voters we can:

- support tax levy requests and sustain our local public schools. Our children and communities deserve high quality education even if lawmakers are not willing to honor their responsibility to provide adequate funding.
- lobby state lawmakers to commit any remaining surplus funds to the education of our neediest students for this school year. The current plan is to add any unencumbered funds to the General Revenue Fund.
- identify and support candidates for the legislature who will make public education their priority in the next state budget. Work on the budget begins in January of 2027. The current legislature has had two chances during this biennium to adequately fund public education and squandered both of them.”

Budget Surplus: Honesty Response

1. Statement to be released: August 26
2. Toolkit for **in-house use**
 - a. Each partner uses own protocols for election season
 - b. Follows into Lame Duck
 - c. Talking points focused on issue of school funding
 - d. Educational in that it sets up budget points for next GA session
 - e. School board resolutions, Letters to editor, Other suggestions

Guidance for Local Leagues

1. The [Toolkit](#) that has been created is not to be shared. If you want to make use of the templates or downloadable sheets, download them into a separate document with clear instructions of how to use them.
2. **As League, we do not lobby for or advocate in any way during election season. This is very necessary for our first and primary mission: getting out the vote.**
3. We can meet behind the scenes with school officials to find out what they are doing and encourage some action on their part.
4. We can encourage parents and community members to write LTEs and op-eds about the need for fully funding schools under the Cupp-Paterson School Funding Plan.
5. We can encourage parents and community members to focus on the most needy in our schools.
6. We can ask questions during candidates forums about the issue.
7. We can educate the public to ask the questions of candidates as they attend events or our talking to candidates at their door.

How to Use the Toolkit

Take Action

1. **Tell Ohio Legislators to Direct Remaining Surplus Funds to Ohio's Most Vulnerable Students.** The remaining \$536 million should go to students with disabilities, students in poverty, and English learners.

You can encourage others to do this, but do not do this as League.

2. **Support Local School Levies this November.** The funding crisis facing our schools is a direct result of legislators' budget decisions. We must support schools with a "yes" vote at the ballot and elect pro-public education candidates.

Yes, you can do this. In doing so, you can point to the funding issues in the budget as the reason for these levies. You can also talk about the need to be involved in the next budget process that starts with the new GA. You can also point out that voters can ask candidates about school funding.

3. **Join the Fight for Fair Funding.** Next spring, Ohio lawmakers will determine our state budget for 2028 and 2029. Join the fight to fully fund our public schools, which serve nearly 90% of Ohio's students.

Definitely!!! We have strong positions on public education funding. Follow us through what may come out during lame duck. Make sure you join our actions during the next budget process!

Sample Questions for Candidates

The budget surplus issue tells us about the priorities of the legislature. This should be a concern of voters - how will you approach the next state budget if elected?

Where does public education fall in your priorities for the budget?

Given the budget surplus, what would be your priorities for these funds?



2026

NATIONAL CONVENTION

women unite & rise

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of* THE UNITED STATES

Columbus, Ohio



Defending a Democracy Under Seige





Defending a Democracy Under Siege

VOTING RIGHTS

Ensuring that every eligible voter has equitable access to register, vote, and have their ballot counted fairly and accurately.

PROTECTING ELECTIONS

Protecting and empowering voters to ensure that our elections are fair, accessible, and representative of all Americans.

REDISTRICTING

Ensuring fair and equitable representation for all residents through transparent and accountable redistricting processes and protection of the US Census.

IMMIGRATION



Advocating for a fair immigration process and a path to citizenship. Standing up for immigrant communities to ensure they receive fair treatment under the law and encouraging new citizens' participation in our democracy.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

Protecting and defending the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution and preventing attacks that undermine those fundamental freedoms.

THE PRESIDENCY

Working to guarantee that presidential power is exercised within the constitutional framework of a dynamic balance between the three branches of government (checks and balances). Supporting the Abolition of the Electoral College, including the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

Positions

- Retained All Current LWWUS positions in the areas of representative government, international relations, natural resources and social policy
- Concurrence with LWW Washington State, Protecting the Rights of Immigrants position—in-brief.
- Concurrence with LWW Colorado Religious Freedom Position

Unite & Rise Power Playbook #6

- (August 2026 – October 2026):
- Power Rising for Midterms
- The culmination of our Power Playbook series — where building power and holding power accountable come together to drive impact at scale.
- This final phase activates our nationwide network to deliver record voter participation, protect the vote, and strengthen systems that uphold our democracy during the critical months leading into the midterm election.

September Key Priorities

- Register and re-engage voters
- Center accessibility and inclusion
- Strengthen partnerships and coalition outreach

September Core Actions

- Host a voter registration event on National Voter Registration Day where large numbers of unregistered voters may be available.
- Organize “Vote Together” activities (carpools, walk-to-the-polls, faithbased voting days).
- Launch “Family Vote Pledges” to encourage collective participation and storytelling.
- Finalize and publish your VOTE411 voter guide information by the time people start voting (absentee or early voting dates vary by state).
- Host “Ballot Parties” to help voters leverage the resources on VOTE411 and determine who to vote for, as well as ensure people voting by mail complete all the required steps so that their ballot is counted.

September Core Actions

- Conduct post-primary follow-ups to thank voters and invite continued involvement.
- Host primary debrief community calls to identify barriers, lessons, and priorities.
- Recruit and train volunteers for roles such as election observers, outreach ambassadors, and event leaders.
- Launch/re-launch an election observation program in your community.
- Continue relational organizing and monthly friend banks focused on registration and early voting.
- Spotlight stories for first-time, multigenerational, or newly engaged voters.

September Key Dates

- 4 – 19 Disability Voting Rights Week
- 15 National Voter Registration Day

DEI Learning Across League

Join us on August 26th to Help Shape the Future of DEI Learning Across the League

The conversation from Convention 2026 on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at the League continues! Join us on **August 26th at 3:00pm EST** for an interactive session to reflect on key themes from our DEI session at Convention and help shape the next phase of DEI learning and capacity building across the League. Together, we'll explore four core DEI pillars that will guide our upcoming learning opportunities. [Register to join here.](#)



Around Congress

Congressional Recess Guide for No on SAVE Act

Recess Guide: Everything you need to know about speaking with your member of Congress during an in-district work period or recess. The guide includes tips to set up meetings, drop into district offices, attend a town hall or community event, and follow up.

Talking Points and Action Alerts

[Oppose the SAVE Act](#)

[SAVE Act & Voter Eligibility Talking Points](#)

[Voter ID Act: What You Need to Know](#)

Recess Meeting Report Form

During congressional recess periods, we ask League members to set up meetings in their in-district offices with their members of Congress and/or attend town halls organized by members of Congress. Please [use the form](#) below to report what happened in your meeting.

RECESS MEETING REPORT FORM



Immigration Concurrence

The New Position: Protecting the Rights of Immigrants

The League of Women Voters believes that all residents of the United States, regardless of immigration status or citizenship, should be treated with dignity and respect. This means that all residents, regardless of immigration status or citizenship, should have access to essential state-funded services, have the opportunity to avail themselves of legal representation in court and immigration proceedings, and have the opportunity to live and work in safety. The League encourages all elected officials and government leaders in the United States to take action to ensure these fundamental rights. It also means that political leaders have an obligation to condemn xenophobia, discrimination, and anti-immigrant rhetoric.

What This Adds

The new position on protecting the rights of immigrants is based on a LWVWA position that was adopted in 2025. The existing 2008 LWVUS position on immigration addresses who should be admitted to the US.

The proposed position on the rights of Immigrants addresses what happens once they are here.

Under our old position, we advocated for:

- Policies that promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business, and employment needs of the US; baree responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises.
- Laws that provide an efficient and expeditious system for legal entry of immigrants to the US.
- Policies to improve economies, education, job opportunities, and living conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.
- Provisions for individuals already living in the US without legal permission to earn legal status.
- Federal payments to impacted communities to address the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

With the new position, we can

- Condemn xenophobia, racism, discrimination against immigrants, and anti-immigration rhetoric at all levels of government, business, and civil society and demand elected officials and government leaders take clear and consistent actions to counter these threats to democracy.
- Encourage local policies that protect the rights of immigrants, including through litigation when necessary.
- Take leadership in ensuring access to legal services for all persons, regardless of immigration status; particularly immigrants in removal proceedings.
- Advocate local governments seek to provide essential services to all residents, regardless of immigration status.
- Advocate for effective coordination among local agencies and other organizations that interact with immigrants and refugees, including funding to permit such coordination.
- Advocate for safe working conditions, fair pay and benefits, and the right to unionize for all workers, regardless of immigration status.

Pending State Legislation

- HB26: Protecting Ohio Communities Act (requires law enforcement agencies to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement, set ineligibility for state and local public benefits).
- HB42: requires law enforcement agencies and other public state and local agencies to report citizenship and immigrations status of persons interact with.
- HB200: prohibits any person who is unlawfully present in the US from knowing entering, attempting to enter, or being present in Ohio.
- HB281: requires hospitals to permit federal and state law enforcement to enter to enforce federal immigration law
- HB282: requires courts to consider a person's immigration status, and whether the person is unlawfully in the US, when determining bail, choosing a sentence, or imposing community control sanctions.
- HB700: prohibits state or local public benefits from being provided to those ineligible based on immigration status and prohibits Ohio Access to Justice Foundation from using money to provide legal services to individuals unlawfully present in the US.
- HB826: criminalize obstructing federal immigration enforcement
- HB 929: prohibits issuance of vehicle registration to persons without legal status, prohibits multi-year or permanent vehicle registration for temporary residents.
- SB153: requires proof of citizenship to register to vote or update voter registration.
- SB172: requires state and local public offices to allow the arrest or detention of those who are or are suspected of being unlawfully present in the US for removal or other immigration related proceedings.



Religious Freedom Concurrence



The New Position - Also Our State Position

The League of Women Voters stands for the separation of church and state and religious freedom founded upon individual conscience, free of social or political influence by any state or religious body; these fundamental civil rights are threatened by religious nationalism.

The First Amendment of the US Constitution reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The League of Women Voters believes that the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment are cornerstones of our democracy.

Ohio's Governing Documents Protect Religious Freedom

1. Protect freedom of beliefs and worship (practice).
2. Advance nonsectarian public education (establishment).
3. Public school educators are government employees and subject to religious neutrality.

Lawmakers undermine religious freedom with vouchers, censorship and religious displays

Vouchers use public funds for religious education.

Vouchers undermine adequate funding of public education.

State law requires public schools to transport private school students at local school district expense.

Laws require release time for religious education and posting religious symbols.

Many new laws control freedom of speech and academic freedom in the name of religious practice.

New Toolkit!!!

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN OHIO

A Non-Partisan Toolkit for Informed Conversations, Civic Engagement, and Advocacy



www.lwvohio.org



www.honestyforohioeducation.org

Democracy depends on informed voters, constitutional literacy, and respectful civic dialogue...

The Collaborators are (LWVO and Honesty for Education), join us and strengthen our voices.

Toolkit Contents

Core Educational Modules

1| Key Terms and History of Religious Freedom

2| Understanding Religious Freedom in the Ohio Constitution

3| Legislative Trends in Ohio

Section 4| How To Take Action

- Action Alert Tool
- Letters to the Editor
- Shareable One-Pagers
- Graphics

References & Additional Resources

Full citations and source materials included at the end of the toolkit.

TWO CLAUSES. ONE FREEDOM.

The First Amendment creates a balance that protects religious freedom and equality for everyone.



This balance is the foundation of religious freedom in America.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

VS.

RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM



Two very different ideas. Only one is consistent with our Constitution and democracy.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM



Protects the right of everyone to practice, change, or not practice religion.



Government is neutral and respects all faiths and nonbeliefs equally.



Rooted in the U.S. Constitution and the principle of equal rights for all.



Allows diverse communities to live, worship, and thrive together in peace.

RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM



Seeks to promote one religion—or one set of religious beliefs—in government and public life.



Government favors a particular religion and sidelines or discriminates against others.



Undermines equality and threatens the First Amendment and our democratic values.



Creates division, resentment, and exclusion in our communities.



MANY FAITH LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES OPPOSE CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM.

People of faith across traditions believe religion should inspire service—not be used to gain political power or control government.



OUR CONSTITUTION PROTECTS US ALL

The First Amendment's Establishment Clause keeps government from endorsing religion. The Free Exercise Clause protects the right of all people to practice their faith—or no faith—freely.



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS'
OF OHIO



HONESTY
for OHIO
EDUCATION

Learn more. Get involved. Make your voice heard. lwvohio.org

LEGISLATIVE TRENDS IN OHIO

2023–2026: Bills That Threaten Church–State Separation and Public Education



RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

- Dozens of bills would allow or require the Bible or religious texts in classrooms.
- Attempts to allow prayer, religious displays, and chaplains in public schools.

WHY IT MATTERS

Public schools should educate, not indoctrinate. These bills violate the Establishment Clause and exclude students of other faiths and no faith.



VOUCHER & SCHOOL CHOICE EXPANSION

- Continued efforts to expand vouchers and “education savings accounts.”
- Public dollars can be used for private religious schools and homeschooling.

WHY IT MATTERS

Diverts funds from public schools and uses taxpayer money to support religious instruction.



TEN COMMANDMENTS & RELIGIOUS DISPLAYS

- Bills introduced to require the Ten Commandments in classrooms and government buildings.
- Push for “In God We Trust” displays and other religious symbols.

WHY IT MATTERS

Government should not promote religion or convey a message that favors one faith over others.



RELEASE TIME & OFF-CAMPUS RELIGIOUS PROGRAMS

- Bills would require schools to allow students to leave for religious instruction during the school day.
- Schools must also provide transportation.

WHY IT MATTERS

Uses school resources to support religious instruction and excludes students who do not participate.



“PARENTAL RIGHTS” LEGISLATION

- Broad bills give parents veto power over curriculum and materials.
- Used to remove books and restrict honest education about history, identity, and science.

WHY IT MATTERS

Undermines academic freedom, harms inclusive education, and can be used to advance religious or political agendas.



STAY INFORMED. SPEAK UP. VOTE.

These proposals affect our schools, our communities, and the rights of every Ohioan.

Track bills. Contact your legislators. Make your voice heard.



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS'
OF OHIO



HONESTY
for OHIO
EDUCATION

Learn more. Get involved. Make your voice heard. lwvohio.org



Programs

Presented by LWVO & Honesty for Ohio Education

Register [here](#)

PUBLIC EDUCATION, **DEMOCRACY**, AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT

— WHAT'S AT STAKE? —

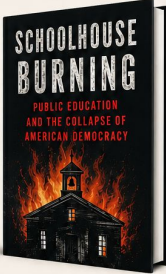
 **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 7-8:30 PM**



DEREK BLACK

Professor of Law,
Ernest F. Hollings Chair in
Constitutional Law, and Director of the
Constitutional Law Center,
University of South Carolina
School of Law.

Authored
Schoolhouse Burning



“ — FROM BLACK'S ARTICLE: —

Once conceived as the means to sustain American democracy, public schools are now entwined with the forces tearing it down. This Article is the first to analyze current education trends as a form of what international scholars term democratic erosion. ”



MODERATOR:
BRYAN WARNICK
OSU professor and chair of the
Department of Education.



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS
OF OHIO



HONESTY
FOR OHIO EDUCATION

— EDUCATE. ★ EMPOWER. ★ UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. —

Important Education Program





Resources

Books in the LWVO Library

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised is the book on parliamentary procedure, yet those not well versed in that comprehensive manual can find themselves lost—and delayed—while trying to locate the most important rules. The solution? ***Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief.***

The Little Book of Boards: A Board Member's Handbook for Small (and Very Small) Nonprofits by [Erik Hanberg](#) is a practical, conversational guide designed for people who join small nonprofit boards with little to no prior experience. It breaks down core duties, meeting mechanics, and relationships with executive directors.

The Imperfect Board Member: Discovering the Seven Disciplines of Governance Excellence is a 2006 leadership fable by Jim Brown. The book uses a fictional CEO named David Slater to show how corporate, non-profit, and faith-based boards can move past dysfunction to build real trust, healthy communication, and strong organizational results.

More Information on Data Centers

AUG 13, 2026 WHEN DATA CENTERS COME TO TOWN- VIRTUAL

Data Centers are changing Ohio's landscape and reshaping our communities in big cities like Columbus and small towns like Clarington. Today, there are 200 and counting data centers in Ohio – the fifth highest among all the states.

In exchange for generous handouts from statehouse politicians, big tech corporations made big promises for Ohio. Now, they're driving up our electric bills, draining our fresh water, and cutting secret deals with local governments.

Ohioans can come together and ensure we get to have a say over what happens in our communities. Join us to hear from policy experts, local officials and directly impacted residents. We'll discuss the reasons behind Ohio's data center boom, the implications for daily lives, and how we can ensure all Ohioans share in any benefits.

- **Slide deck** (Video Recording- coming soon)
- **Data Centers Info Sheet**



NOT ALL DATA CENTERS ARE THE SAME

Public concern over data-center growth often treats all facilities as though they have similar impacts. They do not and conflating the two can weaken advocacy.

CLOUD / ENTERPRISE DATA CENTERS

These are the long-established facilities that run websites, email, streaming, business software, storage, banking, and cloud services.

- Power demand can be substantial, but is usually lower and more incremental.
- Their grid and water impacts are often manageable at the local level.
- They are now the basic digital infrastructure that has been used across the economy for decades.

AI HYPERSCALE DATA CENTERS

These newer facilities train and operate large AI systems using extremely dense banks of powerful, specialized computer processors.

- Individual campuses can require hundreds of megawatts of electricity.
- Cooling needs can create major water demands, depending on the technology used.
- They may require new substations, transmission lines, and even additional power generation.
- Their rapid growth can materially affect utility planning and electric rates.

WHY THE DISTINCTION MATTERS

Many cloud/enterprise data centers can add up to substantial demand, but their impacts are more easily managed. They are usually smaller, more distributed, and added incrementally over time. A few very large AI data centers can impose the same or greater total load suddenly and in concentrated locations, forcing major new grid, generation, and cooling infrastructure.

If critics describe every data center using the most extreme AI-related impacts, they risk overstating the problem and losing credibility. It can also divert attention and political resources away from the facilities creating the newest and largest infrastructure pressures.

It can also divert attention and political resources away from the facilities creating the newest and largest infrastructure pressures.

A better approach is: Different scale = different rules.

The policy question should not be whether "data centers" are good or bad. It should be which facilities create significant public costs or risks, and what requirements are appropriate for their size and impact.

The emerging issue is primarily AI hyperscale growth, not ordinary cloud computing.

Focusing attention where there is the greatest potential impact and concern produces the greater results.

NOT ALL DATA CENTERS ARE THE SAME

Why people concerned about data-center growth should distinguish Cloud / Enterprise facilities from AI hyperscale facilities

CLOUD / ENTERPRISE DATA CENTERS



Run websites, email, storage, streaming, and business apps



Usually lower to moderate power demand per site



Impacts are often local and incremental



Long-established part of the digital economy



Think: essential digital infrastructure

AI HYPERSCALE DATA CENTERS



Train and run large AI models



Much denser computing and far higher power demand



Need major cooling and can use much more water



Can require new substations, transmission, and generation



Think: industrial-scale computing

WHY THE RESOURCE DIFFERENCE MATTERS

moderate to large



Electricity



very large to extreme

varies, often manageable



Cooling / Water



can become a major issue

usually incremental



Grid impact



can reshape local grid planning

The Basic Takeaway

KEY TAKEAWAY



Treating all data centers as the same can dilute advocacy and weaken policy.



Different scale =
different rules



Focus attention
where impacts
are largest



Target AI hyperscale
growth without confusing
it with ordinary cloud
infrastructure



Note: Some cloud campuses can also be large, but AI-driven growth is the newer and more disruptive concern.



Next Lobby Call

September 8,
7 PM

